

Dealing with the inhumani (was Re: (whorl) To Adam: Christ in Eden)

The Whorl list — 1 messages, 1 voices, 10 Apr 2001

<https://urth.darkrealm.vip/thread/whorl/1333>

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Adam Stephanides — 10 Apr 2001, 20:07

on 4/9/01 3:25 AM, Nicholas Gevers at vermoulion at yahoo.com wrote:
Assuming (as Wolfe and Silk are, let me emphasise again, unwilling naively to do) that the Secret can be fully harnessed

To be sure: Silk explicitly states that the Secret can't be used (I'm not sure what Wolfe thinks). But he does say that if everyone could love each other, then the inhumani could be reduced to unintelligent animals. And the inhumani think the Secret can be used, so it must be at least plausible.

it has a clear practical application.
Note how often Horn/Silk emphasises the vulnerability of the poor, the elderly, and the isolated to the inhumani. Answer: protect them, look after them, so that they are no longer defenseless; implement social justice, stop fighting among yourselves.

Yes, this is the received view on this list. But when I think about it, I don't see how it would work. We're talking, after all, about predators who can fly. The only way to protect the isolated would be to end their isolation: i.e., to make everyone live in a larger settlement, like it or not. And people doing agricultural tasks would have to be guarded all the time, which basically implies doing everything collectively. And you'd also need a centralized registry of all the humans on Blue, to stop inhumani from insinuating themselves into people's households like Fava did. If this is the way to defeat the inhumani, then the colonists don't need another Jesus, they need another Stalin.

Otoh, maybe this would only be necessary during conjunction; maybe without the harvest during conjunction, not enough inhumani can get human blood for the population of intelligent inhumani to be self-sustaining. In that case, all that would be necessary would be for everybody to shelter in a city during conjunction. That wouldn't be so hard. In fact, the motive of self-preservation alone could lead the colonists to implement it, and the cities to bear the burden of sheltering a large population for a few weeks every few years. (I could be misremembering and conjunction lasts much longer, in which case disregard this paragraph.) But in that case, "loving one another" doesn't enter into it. And it's hard to see why Silk would then say that the Secret can't be used. (You'd still need the central registry, though.)

Utopia, in other words. And once this has been realised, by all means offer the inhumani a voluntary source of human blood; make them human, absorb them into utopia.

But Silk says that if we loved one another, the inhumani could be reduced to animals, not made human.

Adam: "But Horn doesn't kill Jahlee as a deterrent to other inhumani; he kicks her to death in anger, and is

deeply ashamed of it afterwards. (And if it had been a deterrent, then it didn't work, since it was followed shortly afterwards by the mass attack.)

"I agree, though, that Jahlee's death is a plausible development, though not inevitable. My complaint was not at the failure of the inhumis subplot to resolve in a utopian fashion, but at its failure to resolve at all (except as far as Jahlee is concerned). The Secret was a big letdown (I don't buy the theory that Horn has concealed the real secret from us, for reasons I've stated before, and if I did it wouldn't make me happier), and the victory over the massed inhumis at the wedding solves nothing.

"The more I think about that wedding attack, though, the fishier it sounds. Such a mass attack (at least six hundred inhumis) seems to be unprecedented. It must be very rare, at least, or Blue would have to be far more militarized and regimented than it is. Would Juganu really be able to get hundreds of inhumis to deviate from their usual habits and join him in his private revenge? And would these inhumis continue the attack once they saw that the wedding party was armed, contrary to expectations?"

Jahlee's death foreshadows the wedding massacre, which IS a deterrent.

Not really. All it does is demonstrate that massed attack against superior weaponry is a losing tactic. The inhumis already know that humans will defend themselves.

Adam, I think you miss the real motives for Juganu's attack, motives which numerous other inhumis share. Motive Number One: Horn/Silk and his wife know the Secret, and those around them may well have got wind of it too. So: attack en masse and kill them when they are all together.

If the object was to kill Silkhorn and his family, there were a lot of better opportunities to wipe them out than during the wedding. If the idea was to wipe out everybody who might have heard the Secret, the inhumis should have realized that they were bound to fail (the commotion would attract armed men sooner or later), and the survivors would have no qualms about using the Secret, assuming they knew it.

Motive Number Two: Silk/Horn is a Messiah to the Inhumis, the human being in whom they have reposed much of their hope of becoming truly human; now he has turned against them, and they feel betrayed. So attack en masse and kill him. And forget the risks of doing so.

I really don't recall any evidence that the inhumis generally see Silkhorn as a savior.

In other words, the inhumis subplot certainly resolves itself; the terms on which humans should interact with the inhumis are laid down: tame them, in a nutshell, first by force and then by another sort of sanguinary suasion, as it were.

I still don't see that the wedding massacre contributes anything to this. The colonists were defending themselves against the inhumis already. Since the inhumis are unlikely to repeat their tactical mistake, the colonists haven't learned anything useful to the battle. And if Silk did indeed have "loving the inhumis into submission," so to speak, in his mind, he never mentions it to anybody. (He talks about the humans' cruelty making the inhumis crueler, but that's not the same thing.)

--Adam

*This is WHORL, for discussion of Gene Wolfe's Book of the Long Sun.